

German-American Bank
(American National Bank) (First Federal Building)
624 Felix Street
St. Joseph
Buchanan County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1845

HABS
MO,
11-SAJOE,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GERMAN-AMERICAN BANK HABS No. MO-1845
(American National Bank Building) (First Federal Bank)

Location: 624 Felix Street, St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri
Present Occupant: Blue Valley Federal Savings and Loan
Present Use: Commercial offices and savings and loan establishment
Significance: Building Symbolizes economic importance of German immigrants in the midwest during the late nineteenth century. It also is an important local example of Romanesque Revival architecture applied to an early skyscraper.

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1889
2. Architect: Firm of Eckel and Mann
3. Original Owner: The German-American Bank
4. Alterations and additions: Due to several extensive remodelling projects, little or none of the original interior survives. The exterior, however, retains much of its original character. In 1920 several shops below street level on the east facade and the western portion of the north facade were removed.

Between 1974 and 1976 the First Federal Savings and Loan Association installed black steel sash, mirrored windows and new electric heating and cooling systems throughout the building. A green marble pediment which had been installed at an unknown date within the arch of the northern portal was removed.

- B. Historical Context: The German-American Bank Building reflects the rapid growth of St. Joseph during the last decades of the 19th century and the influx of German-speaking citizens. The bank opened in June 1887, and moved to its new building in 1889. The bank was nationalized in 1908. In 1918 its name was changed to the American National Bank.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building contains many details associated with Richardsonian Romanesque Revival architecture, particularly the repeating arches in the cornice level and over windows and doors. Moreover, the tripartite division of the building (into a ground level, an intermediate section with offices, and a definite cornice or "cap" to the building) echoes the skyscraper style advocated by Louis Henri Sullivan.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent

B. Description of exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures 100 feet along its east and west sides, and 60 feet along the north and south. Due to the change in grade along the site, the ground floor level is above grade along the structure's south facade and below along its north facade.
2. Wall construction: Exterior walls are primarily of smooth red brick. Rusticated or carved red sandstone is used as embellishments and as the voussoirs and lintels over windows and doors.
3. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: North and east facades have the primary public entrances. Heavy Richardsonian arches with rusticated sandstone voussoirs top both doorways. On the north side, the door is flanked by tooled sandstone pilasters, each embellished with scrolling, acanthus motifs, and a band of acanthus containing alternating figures of birds and squirrels. The east portal, while larger, contains less detailed carving.
 - b. Windows: Current windows of black steel and mirrored glass date to the 1976 remodelling. Window lintels on two-story windows at ground level are of cast iron, while others are stone or brick.

South side of building has several double-hung sash windows at third, fourth, and fifth floor levels.

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II. SOURCE OF INFORMATION

National Registry of Historic Places Nomination Form, compiled by Noelle Soren, February 6, 1978

Prepared by:
Robert Buerglener, historian
June 30, 1988

ADDENDUM TO
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(AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK)
(FIRST FEDERAL BUILDING)
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Saint Joseph
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